DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 461 CE 039 564

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TITLE The Employment Environment for Mildly Intellectually Handicapped Young People.
INSTITUTION Monash Univ., Clayton, Victoria (Australia).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-909931-14-3
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 32p.
AVAILABLE FROM Education Faculty, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia 3168.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Economics; Education Work Relationship; *Employment Opportunities; *Employment Problems; *Employment Projections; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); *Labor Market; *Mild Mental Retardation; Secondary Education
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

Four factors influence the successful employment of mildly intellectually handicapped young people. These are the qualities of the individual seeking work, employer attitudes, the nature and content of the job, and prevailing labor market conditions. Economic, technological, and labor market trends seem to indicate the development of a dual economy in the future. A highly capital-intensive, high technology, efficient, formal institutional economy will develop that will produce mass goods and services and feature an employed work force of high and rising average skill but small and declining size. The intellectually handicapped will increasingly turn to another developing economy characterized as informal, domestic, self-service (a so-called free economy), devoted to the production of untraded (or informally traded) goods and services involving high labor intensity and alternative technology, with a low-income, low skilled, non-employed work force. Specific suggestions to improve the prospects of the mildly intellectually handicapped for making the transition from childhood to maturity, independence, and employment include incentives for employers; identification of suitable jobs; job restructuring; sheltered work; promotion of sheltered work stations; identification of appropriate educational objectives, vocational skills, and para-vocational skills; career education and work experience; placement, transition, and followup; and legislative action. (YLB)

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THE EMPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT FOR MILDLY INTELLECTUALLY HANDICAPPED YOUNG PEOPLE

Warren Mann and Alan Gregory

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1981

Education Faculty Monash University
Clayton Victoria 3168 Australia

CE 039564

First published 1981

Education Faculty
Monash University
Clayton Victoria 3168
Australia

C Alan Gregory 1981

Printed in Australia by
Impact Printing Pty. Ltd.,
Victoria St.,
Brunswick, Victoria

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
Mann, Warren.
The employment environment for mildly
intellectually handicapped young people.

ISBN 0 909931 14 3.

1. Mentally handicapped - Employment - Australia.
2. Young adults - Australia. I. Gregory, Alan.
II. Monash University. Faculty of Education.
III. Title.

331.5'90994

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of secular unemployment in the 1970s has represented a significant change from the low levels of unemployment that prevailed in Australia in the post war period.

The 6 per cent of the labour force unemployed in 1980 is in marked contrast to the 1-1.5 per cent unemployment levels of the 1950s and 60s.

Inevitably young people as new entrants to the labour force suffer in the search for employment. How then the person who is handicapped?

It was a link with the South Yarra Work Preparation Centre and the Monash Research Project associated with this centre, which is concerned with the preparation for work of mildly intellectually handicapped young people, that brought to attention the possible difficulties in placing such young people in the deteriorating employment scene. Was it more difficult to find employment for these young people? Was there any change in the type of jobs most suitable?

The South Yarra Work Preparation Centre and a similar one in Granville N.S.W. were opened in 1973.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (20 December 1971) stated:

> "The mentally retarded person has a right to economic security and to a decent standard of living. He has a right to perform productive work or to engage in any other meaningful occupation to the fullest extent of his capabilities."

The Bright Report in South Australia, drew attention to the difficulties the physically disabled person faced in times of high unemployment.[1]

The opportunity for employment is perhaps the most generally accepted route to a normal life that a handicapped person can have. It is "normalcy" or "mainstreaming" that is regarded as a key goal.

There has been growing interest (if only in limited circles) in the employment of disabled or handicapped people.

However despite this pleasing growth in awareness there are still widely held misconceptions. One is to equate disability or handicap with physical disability to the neglect of mentally or intellectually handicapped people. The term "handicapped" is too embracing and can be interpreted to include only a small group of such people. Secondly there are assumptions that disabled or handicapped workers are inferior to so called "normal" workers, and more accident prone, more "difficult" and less efficient.

What research evidence is available indicates that handicapped employees are no different to "normal" employees over a whole range of criteria, efficiency, absenteeism, accidents etc.[2]

If there is a reluctance to accept the physically handicapped employee then it is far greater in the case of the mentally handicapped employee. The common pattern as Kettle reminds us is that "mentally handicapped people are denied the opportunity to do work with which they could cope and which would afford them both dignity and independence".[3] Overseas studies indicate that where mentally handicapped people are given employment opportunities employers are more than satisfied,[4] and that there was no evidence at all that such employees were less regular, punctual or reliable. Indeed they seemed to have a better record than "normal" employees, even though there was the necessity in many cases for some job modification to cater for the disability. The barrier to employment though has not been the problems of job modification but rather attitudes to handicapped people and assumptions about their work potential which are not soundly based. So opportunities may not be given nor appropriate back up facilities provided, an important prerequisite. It is not just of difficulties imagined or exaggerated but capabilities not considered. Countries which have endeavoured to ensure employment for the handicapped by legislation setting employment quotas have not reported success, and illustrate again the importance of employer and community attitudes.

This study was made possible by a grant from the Research Committee of the Education Faculty Monash University and sincere thanks are extended to Professor

R.T. White and the Research Committee for their support. This grant was part of a donation made toward the Faculty's work in the field of handicapped persons by an anonymcus donor. Our thanks to this donor.

Warren Mann is well known for his work in careers and guidance and especially as careers and appointments office at Monash University. Asked to give three months of his time in an early retirement, Warren Mann brought to the problem extensive experience in the field of careers and employment, though he had little previous acquaintance with the problems of the handicapped person.

This report is the result of some months interviewing of employers in a wide range of industries - private and government, those traditionally taking handicapped employees and those not. It is also a study of current methods of preparing mentally intellectually handicapped young people for the labour force and life generally. Their responses to a number of direct questions was frank and these views are reported. All responses were confidential and so any detailed acknowledgement of thanks is not possible. In addition we acknowledge the assistance of various people involved with mentally handicapped young people - teachers. psychologists, social workers, administrators. Our thanks to Elaine Scott for the typing.

Thanks must also be extended to colleagues Dr Gerald Burke and Dr Pierre Gorman for their interest and advice. Dr Gorman in addition to a keen interest and helpful advice made available his extensive resources of materials and publications which proved invaluable as we noted with regret the difficulty of obtaining relevant materials in the major libraries. We are also grateful to Christine Brooke and the Victorian Commercial Teachers' Association for their assistance in publication.

In this study, issues which are better examined elsewhere have not been discussed at length but reference is made to other writing which complement this one.

Alan Gregory
October 1981
Monash University

Reference Notes

1 The Law and Persons with Handicaps - Vol.I: Physical Handicap. Committee on Rights of Persons with Handicaps, Adelaide: Government Printer, 1978, pp 134-65. (Chairman, Sir Charles Bright).

2 M. Kettle Disabled People and Their Employment. Association of Disabled Professionals, London, 1980.

3 Ibid., p.25.

4 Ibid., p.27.

The Nature of the Problem

In this International Year of Disabled Persons, it is appropriate that some attention should be given to the nature of the employment market confronting young people with handicaps of one kind or another who seek to enter the work force. Our task here is to consider this problem from the viewpoint of one particular category of handicapped person, those who suffer intellectual impairments which render them technically educable only in special schools or classes. The Education Department's special education service in Victoria puts a great deal of effort, resources and dedicated staff time into preparing mildly intellectually handicapped young people to make, if at all possible, the transition to integrated self-reliance in the community. The Commonwealth Department of Social Security has a Work Preparation Centre well established and a second proposed with the same aim, though some doubt exists whether the young people admitted to this programme might more properly be classified in the less-handicapped 'border-line retarded' group. We shall examine the current employment environment as it relates to MIH people in Victoria, consider possible developments that may modify that environment, and suggest some ways in which the prospects for them might be improved.

In considering these matters, the first significant problem is that of definition; the terms in general use need to be fully understood. Some important distinctions have been made by the World Health Organization: impairment is any disturbance in the normal mental or physical function; it may or may not imply a disability, which is a loss or reduction of functional capacity arising from impairment; a disability may impose widely varying degrees of handicap (defined as the disadvantage consequent upon disability), depending on environmental conditions and social attitudes.

It should be pointed out at once that the use of any of these terms in respect of a particular individual is, or can be, depreciatory. Who among us does not suffer impairment of mental function, at least temporarily and often unrecognized? For many this could amount to a disability, though not to the extent that they are unable to hold acceptable places in competitive employment. Such people, however, are not regarded as being handicapped; this term is applied only to those whose variation from the norm is sufficient for them to require special help in preparing for or coping with normal independent living and competitive employment. But the predictions involved in whatever tests may be used to distinguish those at risk of such handicaps can be and in many cases clearly are self-fulfilling. The categories in use are labels which need to be applied with the greatest care. A child diagnosed

as mildly mentally or intellectually handicapped may be stigmatized unnecessarily, with deleterious effects at school and in subsequent career. This kind of labelling should be avoided wherever possible, and regular reviews should be made to determine whether some reclassification is appropriate.

Despite this, the use of some potentially depreciatory terms is so widespread as to render them necessary in discussion to avoid misunderstanding. One can be grateful that the old terms, moron, imbecile and idiot, are no longer enshrined in law and common usage. The scale adopted by both the World Health Organizastion and by the American Association on Mental Deficiency is widely used. The definition of mental retardation makes specific mention of the concurrent existence of "subaverage general intellectual functioning" and "deficits in adaptive behaviour"[1]. Nevertheless, it is to IQ levels that educational assumptions are attached, despite the widely discussed fact that the IQ's "prognostic implications have been repeatedly found unsatisfactory in estimating the retarded person's future societal adjustment"[2]. Table 1 presents the WHO classification with its attendant educational assumptions.

In practice, admissions to the various programmes, schools and institutions are usually made on the basis of tests and inventories designed to illumine personality and background as well as those attempting to measure IQ. Despite this, the quantitative presentation of IQ represents a convenience hard to resist, and it is common in discussion to have what are in effect firm categorizations made on that sole criterion.

The group with which we are concerned comprises what the Warnock Report proposed should be termed 'children with moderate learning difficulties'[4] and the adults to which they develop. It includes those with mild, though often multiple, sensory, physical and emotional disabilities, thought to constitute at least half of the total. Also included are those whose difficulties can be ascribed to cultural or social deprivation, as well as to disease, injury and genetic defect.

There are no firm statistics on the total number who can be classified as MIH, but considerations canvassed elsewhere[5] suggest that in Victoria the number involved might be of the order of 80,000 of whom perhaps 30,000 would be aged less than 20 years. The Cole Committee's estimate that there could be some 17,000 Victorian school-aged children in the MIH category is not inconsistent with these figures. Less than 3,000 of these children are catered for by the special schools, and the additional capacity provided by the Work Preparation Centres is slight. At least three-quarters are consigned to normal schools to be involved in a 'mainstreaming' system which is denied adequate recognition or resources[6]. The barriers to employment opportunity facing these people are indeed formidable.

Many studies have been made of the employment success and failure of MIH people. Though there is wide divergence in the published opinions supported by these studies, most of which survey groups that are too small to be statistically convincing and too short-term to reveal career patterns, there is one point that

Table I

Classification of Mental Handicap[3]

IQ Level	WHO Classification	Educational Capacity
85-68	Border-line (Level 1)	Educable in normal schools with special attention.
67-52	Mild (Level 2)	Educable in special schools or classes.
51-36	Moderate (Level 3)	Trainable in day training centres and industrial training centres.
35-20	Severe (Level 4)	Trainable in day training centres; low industrial potential.
Below 20	Profound (Level 5)	Completely dependent at all ages.

seems to emerge as firmly established. Intellectual disability by itself does not, within quite wide limits of severity, appear to provide a serious barrier to open employment, or to the enjoyment of an independent if rather restricted life. But when other disabilities are present, as is very often the case, the situation changes; such superimposed impairments as poor motor performances are especially limiting.[7]

Factors in the Employment of MIH Persons

Efforts to integrate MIH school leavers into the community through normal competitive employment are of comparatively recent origin. The proportion of people in this category who are able to cope with open employment, to find a suitable job, work in it successfully and contentedly, and change to another job should circumstances require it, seems to be of the order of 48% although some centres have higher rates than this.[8] Four factors are seen to influence success in this respect:

1. the qualities of the individual seeking work;
2. the attitudes of employers;
3. the nature and content of the work concerned;
4. prevailing labour-market conditions.

The main discussions in this paper will relate to these factors and to their application in the local labour market in the 1980s. But first we shall look briefly at the current situation.

1. Individual Qualities

Many attempts have been made in the literature to find correlations between the success of MIH persons in employment and intellectual, personality and socio-cultural factors. There has been little agreement between them as to what constitutes 'success' in employment; criteria mentioned include: "employment at the time of survey", "some employment since school", "ability to hold job" (for some specified time, usually three months to one year), or "totally independent and self-supporting". None, however has produced convincing evidence of relationships between success (by whatever criterion) and such factors as intelligence and school achievement. Such characteristics as race, sex, and age affect intellectually handicapped people to much the same extent as non-handicapped people. Most writers agree that good work habits such as punctuality, application, response to supervision, sociability, appearance, and personal hygiene are important to employment success, whereas specific job skills are less so.[9] Conley also reviewing the work done in this area, remarks that "Behaviour, rather than ability to work, is often the factor that determines the employability of the retarded".[10]

In our discussions with employers who have had experience with MIH workers, both in the public and private sectors, the qualities that were mentioned as desirable and often to be found among them were their willingness to undertake

low-level, unattractive, boring, and dirty jobs, their stability and low turnover rates in such jobs, and their ability to achieve good punctuality, attendance and safety records. On the other hand, the disadvantages mentioned were the longer periods of induction training that are necessary, the short attention spans and memories, and the commonly observed presence of defective gross and fine motor skills.

2. Employer Attitudes

Studies of employer attitudes have been made by Mahoney in Melbourne[11] and Ward et al. in Sydney[12]. Mahoney also examined the literature relating to employer attitudes to the employment of intellectually handicapped persons.

There are two distinct aspects of employer attitudes. First, the policies adopted by top management will determine whether there is scope within the organization to explore specific opportunities for retarded individuals. Most public employing organizations and a relatively few, mostly larger, private companies have adopted formal employment policies. For public relations if not legal reasons, none of these policy statements will have overtly discriminated against handicapped persons, and it is not uncommon for policies to make specific mention of the organization's willingness to employ such people.

But the cutting edge of employment policies is represented by the personnel staff who recruit candidates for employment and the line management staff who accept or reject them for specific jobs. It is at this level that personal attitudes and prejudices have practical effect. If attitudes here are negative, good and apparently non-discriminatory reasons can always be found for preferring a non-handicapped person to one with a disability for appointment to a particular job. Further, the people at this level are responsible for the initial placement of any retarded applicant who is appointed. The success or failure of this person in the new employment will depend very largely on the nature of the work involved in relation to his (or her) disability, on the understanding and skill of the immediate supervision to which he is subject, on the help that he gets in developing acceptable social behaviour as an employee, and on the patience and competence with which on-the-job training is provided. Vocational failure, when it occurs among MIH young persons, is probably more often attributable to inadequacies in these respects than any inherent unsuitability for work in open employment on the part of the person concerned.

The attitudes to MIH people existing among the line and staff people directly concerned with emplo ment have been investigated by a number of workers. Ward et al. reported a difference in attitudes between those who had employed MIH people and those who had not. The latter expected the MIH worker to have poor relationships with fellow workers, high safety risk, need for extra supervision, poor speed and accuracy, inability to handle job pressures, communication difficulties and problems with training on the job. Those with

experience of their employment had found them to be "steady, reliable, loyal, dedicated, keen to work and, in many cases, excellent long-term employees."[13] In this study, as in others, a positive relationship was found between size of employer and attitude towards employing handicapped workers: the larger the organization, the more likely it is to have favourable attitudes.[14] There have been many overseas reports of mentally handicapped people proving to be fully effective and reliable employees, to the great advantage of, and often to the surprise of the employers who had given them work.[15]

Our discussions with a number of individual executives revealed some qualitative support for these findings. Most of them, in all cases without direct experience with the employment of intellectually handicapped workers, would not accept the proposition that such people could be relied upon in jobs other than those requiring negligible skill and subject to close supervision; several expressed the opinion that the pressure involved in these conditions would prove too great for most such workers. Some agreed, however, that for some jobs, especially those that were slight in content and endlessly repetitive, normal intelligence could be a handicap leading to constant and costly turnover.

None of the employers contacted had made use of the slow-worker permit system which provides for the issue of permits in respect of specified workers allowing them to be paid less than the prevailing wage under a Victorian State determination or certain federal awards. Several, indeed, had not heard of it, but felt that, even if they had, they would not have used it for fear of adverse effects on industrial relations.

3. The Nature and Content of the Job

Most of the jobs taken by MIH young people entering the work force are categorized as 'unskilled', and a large proportion of them are factory jobs. They are in general jobs which require a minimum of on-the-job training; intellectually handicapped people normally take longer to learn a task or procedure. and few employers are prepared to invest the time (and hence cost) needed to provide more than very basic skills. So, for the most part, intellectually handicapped people who gain employment work in dull, routine, repetitive and boring jobs with little prospect of any improvement. Ward et al. report that many of the slightly better quality jobs, such as nursing aides, storemen and packers and work in shipping and materials handling, service industries and food catering services in which the MIH are often employed in the US, are regarded by Australian employers as unsuitable for them[16] in that the level of training required is assumed to be too high.

In Australia, most of the employment for MIH persons has been found in the manufacturing sector[17], as has also been the case in the USA. But attitudes to their employment in this sector seem less favourable here, with, apparently, less recognition of the contribution they can make to a productive work force[18].

The jobs taken by females are broadly similar to those occupied by

males. though there is more emphasis among them on work in the retail sector and in domestic occupations. It is noticeable that females are less likely to be recognised as having a disability sufficient to warrant special school or other supportive systems.[19]

There is a paucity of published work on the nature of the tasks involved in employment of the retarded, and on the need to consider the influence of this factor on assessments of employment success. Mahoney suggests that better job analysis would widen the job opportunities and improve the training of MIH people.[20] Our discussions with employer representatives reveal that very little thought has been given in most cases to restructuring existing jobs or planning new ones so that people with intellectual handicaps can operate more productively in them. We shall return to this question later.

4. Labour Market Conditions

It is generally conceded that unemployment is a major problem in current Australian society and that, within that problem, youth unemployment is the most significant aspect, both as to its magnitude and its potential social consequences. Recent figures suggest that some 15% of the teenagers available for employment have not got jobs, and that the average length of unemployment among them is 25 weeks. Because there is a great deal of 'hidden' unemployment in this group, much of it resulting from young people remaining in the education system beyond the point to which educational and vocational advantages can be gained, the real rate of youth unemployment is undoubtedly much higher. It can be expected that intellectually handicapped young people will be among the most sericusly affected by these conditions.

The extent to which this situation is attributable to passing economic difficulties, and how much of it has resulted from structural changes in the labour market is a matter for considerable debate. Experience in Britain and elsewhere can give us little cause for hope that the problem will be solved quickly.

Relatively little work has been published on the effects of economic fluctuations on the employment of mentally handicapped people. Studies of employment success, including longitudinal studies, have rarely been related to any suitable economic indicators, though some have suggested that economic recessions are likely to affect the MIH worker before most others. Mahoney has commented that, though there is no special reason why retarded employees might be retrenched before less handicapped workers, they are vulnerable to the extent that they occupy marginal, non-essential jobs.[21]

Technological change has received more attention. The view, widely held during the 'fifties and 'sixties, that the coming of automation would largely eliminate unskilled work was challenged by Nixon (1970) who concluded that there was no evidence that changes in technology would "reduce significantly the opportunities for or eliminate the desirability of successful vocational rehabilitation

of the mentally retarded" and suggested that they may actually increase such job opportunities.[22] But his detailed analysis of the US labour market was based on an orderly extension of technological progress along lines which promised a change in the duties of workers with an increase rather than a reduction in the levels of industrial and associated service employment.

With the advantage of another ten years of technological progress to survey, the Myers Committee in Australia was a little more realistic, though still rather more optimistic than many labour-market analysts believe is justified. The Committee reported without comment the view expressed by the Australian Council for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled in its submission that "the mentally retarded ... are likely to encounter restrictions on their employment opportunities because they perform lower-skilled, repetitive tasks that are often the first victims of technological innovation."[23]

The Report suggested that technological change would bring about changes in both the nature and level of skills required, and noted that "Not only are workers in lower-skilled occupations most vulnerable to displacement by technological change, but their education is such that they are less able to take advantage of retraining opportunities, and cannot readily move into the emerging occupations."[24]

The view that structural changes to the labour market have occurred is supported by the Study Group on Structural Adjustment. It suggested that technological change may bring about a situation in which "there is a rapidly growing demand for workers with certain skills, while other skills become redundant and the number of unskilled jobs becomes relatively fewer."[25]

There seems little doubt that, in the kind of economy that we have come to believe is normal, technological change will in the longer term have a very serious effect on the availability of the kinds of jobs for which it is realistic to regard MIH persons as being potentially trainable. Cyclic fluctuations in economic conditions may mitigate or exacerbate the effects from time to time, but with growing competition from neighboring countries and the pressure for less tariff protection Australia will have difficulty in avoiding a decline in manufacturing activity on a scale which would be disastrous for the present pattern of MIH employment.[26]

The MIH and the Future

The assumption underlying the measurement of institutional and systemic success in terms of the ability of individual handicapped people to sell their services in the open labour market seems to have been that society should be relieved of the burden of their maintenance rather than their being given the opportunity to live satisfying and productive lives within the limits of their capacity. Employment, any employment, is deemed to constitute success, no matter how dull, poorly paid, and fundamentally soul-destroying the work involved may be,

how lacking in intrinsic permanence or even how devoid it is of social and economic value. And, of course, many of the MIH people, perhaps most, accept as valid the criterion for success with which they have been conditioned. Their schooling, or much of it, has been directed towards establishing in them values and attitudes consistent with that criterion. In most cases, they are poorly equipped to make the comparisons that might lead to their questioning it. For them, getting and keeping a job removes the stigma of handicap; they are prepared to tolerate much for that, especially when by doing so they win the approval of parents, teachers, and society generally.

But, of course, they are for these very reasons especially vulnerable to the kinds of changes that are occurring. For no reason over which they, or their teachers, have any control, the badges of success are becoming increasingly difficult to acquire. The person who, until recently, would have been absorbed into the labour market to perform a lowly function unattractive to the non-handicapped, now finds that job gone, or suddenly attractive to some better equipped competitor. The alternatives are 'sheltered' employment, activities centres (providing work as occupational therapy for persons on full pension), unemployment (either on a pension or unemployment benefits), or institutionalization, each with connotations of social failure engendered by the education system. This is a regressive situation caused by administrators and educators concerned with the management of problems of the intellectually handicapped generally looking backwards towards past conditions unlikely to return.

Looking broadly at current economic, technological and labour-market trends, it is possible to discern some probable lines of development with which our present system of education and training for the intellectually handicapped is in no way designed to cope. Our objective here is to make some conjectures about developments that may affect them, and to suggest ways of modifying the system and make it sufficiently flexible for the young people concerned to be prepared for lives in the circumstances observable today and also able to adapt to likely or possible changes.

In order to do this, we shall first make some broad assumptions about the future as it will affect the relevant institutions in our society. These are chosen because they project current trends in a way that demands responses which have wide application to other possible lines of development.

A Possible Future

The decline in the manufacturing sector, evident for some years, will continue and accelerate though occasional temporary reversals of the trend may be observed. Much of the manufacturing plant on which the import substitution policy of the 'fifties and 'sixties depended, and much of that which has replaced it, was second-hand, obsolescent in some other country before being brought here to operate in the sheltered atmosphere of a highly protected economy. That protection

is now being called to question, partly because of its enormous cost, but especially since it threatens massive balance-of-payment problems as our natural resources are quarried and shipped off to world markets. The industry that remains after the obsolete, the inefficient and the uneconomic have been shaken out will have survived because of its high productivity and its proximity either to reasonable local markets or sources of bulky and often low-grade resources. It will be highly capital intensive, highly efficient, internationally competitive, essentially involving employment but in comparatively low and declining numbers and of people with comparatively high and rising skill levels.

Alongside this formal manufacturing sector will be an associated service sector. Growth in the service sector in recent decades tended to take up the slack left by declining manufacturing employment. But here again productivity has risen because of technological advances and there are already signs of declining employment in those substantial sections of it which support and are supported by manufacturing industry. The amount of real work generated by all kinds of institutions has been diminishing for some time, though this has been offset by the manufacture of a great deal of spurious work: Parkinson's Law has proved to be a serious and important social principle.

Certain kinds of service activities have increasingly been taken over by the domestic economy, usually as a result of the availability of capital goods from the manufacturing sector. Whole segments of the labour force have all but disappeared as a result - domestic and laundry workers are obvious examples - and others, for example bank tellers, are threatened. Increasingly, those people rejected by, or themselves rejecting, the formal institutional economy are finding home-based or communal, labour-intensive activities with which to support themselves. This resurgent, though up-dated, domestic economy is manifesting itself through communes, co-operatives, 'hobby' farms and a variety of less-formal centres of work without employment[27].

This necessarily very sketchy analysis takes no account of a variety of potentially significant factors such as possible changes in the political complexion of government, a growing unwillingness among the more fortunate to contribute to the improvement of conditions for those who are less so, or possible deteriorations in international relations. Clearly, in any proper analysis, adjustments would need to be postulated to provide for these and other possible complications.

However, in all this we can discern the lineaments of a dual economy. On the one hand, we can already see and expect to develop the highly capital-intensive, 'high' technology, efficient, formal institutional economy, producing mass goods and services, and featuring an employed work force of high and rising average skill but small and declining size. On the other, there is developing an informal, domestic, self-service, so-called 'free'[28] economy devoted to the production of untraded (or informally traded) goods and services involving high labour intensity and 'alternative' technology, with a low-income, low-skilled

non-employed work force. It is to this second economy that the intellectually handicapped will increasingly need to turn for support and fulfilment.

What Needs To Be Done?

Whether or not this is the pattern of change that will be seen in the Australian economy, it is clear that we are approaching a period of great difficulty for the mildly intellectually handicapped. Some quite radical changes will be necessary, especially in the attitudes and objectives of those who educate, train and support these people during their critical years of transition from childhood to maturity and, desirably, independence. In what follows some suggestions are made as to what can be done to improve their prospects of making this transition successfully. The aims of these suggestions are:

- to promote conventional employment for MIH persons and to prepare them for it;
- to encourage the development of informal work for MIH persons and to prepare them to achieve 'significant living without employment'.

Despite the contraction of unskilled and low-skilled work in employment, some is still available; we believe that there will be less of it and that competition for it from people not classified as handicapped will grow. Those concerned with the placement of MIH persons should try to draw attention to the possibilities and advantages of developing new opportunities of this kind, and to promote the special qualifications of MIH persons for appointment to these positions so that employers may be convinced that they can benefit from what otherwise may seem to them to be philanthropic gestures. Close co-operation is necessary between the special educators and those concerned with the vocational habilitation or rehabilitiation of intellectually handicapped children and young adults. Special education authorities should review their academic, social and careers education curricula frequently to ensure that they remain relevant to the needs of their MIH students in the current social and labour market milieu.

In the area of informal work, the kinds of skills that are useful are those associated with domestic, horticultural and agricultural work and with crafts of all kinds. Perhaps the most important and difficult task in this connexion is that of changing attitudes, in parents particularly but also in children, to the work ethic and to what constitutes success in times likely to be vastly different from those experienced by the previous generation. It is, unfortunately, almost certain that many, perhaps most, MIH persons will spend substantial parts of their careers, and in some cases the whole of them, without employment. An objective should be to bring them to appreciate that employment is not necessarily the same as productive work, and that useful and satisfying lives can be built without employment. Certainly, the handicapped are not the only young members of our society who will benefit by recognizing the reality of that.

One final point needs to be made in these general remarks. It was

pointed out earlier that approximately three-quarters of school-age children classifiable as mildly intellectually handicapped are getting their schooling through the normal school system. Some of these will have been recognized and included in special classes; but a significant proportion, perhaps half the total, will have been seen by their teachers as dull, unco-operative individuals in their various classes. These children will reach the legal leaving age with little to show for their years of education, and with no specific training for coping with a bewildering and unfriendly world. It is vital that these people should be identified before leaving school, and that efforts should also be made towards their vocational habilitation. Without some special effort, these people will certainly become part of the 'hard-core' unemployed and, with no inner resources to cope, could represent a significant social problem in the not-distant future.

Here are some specific suggestions in very brief form:

a. Incentives for Employers.

Employers need to be given worthwhile incentives to persuade them to take what many of them see as risks in employing MIH persons. Such incentives could range from favourable publicity through union goodwill to fiscal benefits such as taxation rebates and income support schemes. The arranging of these inducements may require considerable political and other 'lobbying'; perhaps that would best be conducted by associations of parents and other interested people.[29] Care needs to be taken that incentive systems are not abused by unscrupulous employers seeking to take advantage of the cheap labour that they may make available.

b. Identifying suitable Jobs. A fruitful line of approach could arise from the application of job-analysis techniques. Here the objective is to identify the skills and qualities needed to perform a particular job, so that these can be matched against those of the people who might be available to perform it. An alternative objective for our purposes might be to isolate those elements of a particular job which cannot be performed adequately by the person in question so that the job can be appropriately restructured with more emphasis on his or her abilities and preferences.

Various methods of analysing jobs which might be suitable for handicapped persons have been proposed.[30] These are practicable when the suitability of a specific job is being considered for a particular person, but would be impossibly time-consuming in any program to identify appropriate jobs in the labour market. Fortunately, there will soon be available a tool which should simplify the problem very considerably.

The Department of Employment and Youth Affairs, in conjunction with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, is preparing an Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO), and expect to publish it in 1982. Although

other countries have had such classifications for some years (e.g., Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) in the U.S.A., Classification of Occupations and Dictionary of Occupational Titles (CODOT) in the U.K., and the Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations (CCDO)), no comprehensive publication of this kind has previously been prepared for Australia, though the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Commonwealth Employment Service each has inadequate classified lists of occupations for their own purposes. The Australian publication, ASCO, is being compiled with the experience of these other countries in mind, and should have important advantages over them.

ASCO will provide, for each identifiable occupation, an occupational description and a set of 'profile factors' designed to specify the educational and vocational preparation, mental and sensory processes, physical activities, equipment used, relationships with other persons, environmental context, rewards and other requirements and characteristics of the occupation. Given this information, it should be possible to identify for a person with any particular set of interests, abilities and personal qualities the specific job titles for which he or she might be suitable.

Several workers[31] have reported using the DOT for this purpose in respect of handicapped persons and speak highly of the results. ASCO is expected to have certain advantages over DOT in this application, and considerable benefit could accrue from a well-planned study of its use in making more effective the vocational preparation and placement of MIH persons.

c. Improving the 'Fit' of Jobs.

Jobs, of course are not immutable. Typically, a job has a set of duties, and often these make varying demands on the skills and aptitudes of the worker occupying it. In many cases, it is possible to redistribute duties among several jobs, sometimes changing quite markedly the levels of skill needed to perform them satisfactorily. For example, typists and secretaries are often required to make photocopies. In an organization employing a number of people in this way, the removal of this task from the duties of each of them may permit a redistribution of duties and reduction in staff, and it might be quite practicable to fill the resulting vacancy with a MIH person trained as a full-time copying-machine operator. We believe that there are many such possibilities for job restructuring, especially in large organizations.

d. Sheltered Work and Its Supervision

For those MIH people who are unable to cope with open, competitive employment, or unable to secure it because of growing youth unemployment, some form of sheltered work is normally the next option. In Victoria, almost all of this kind of work is located in institutional settings, sheltered workshops or activity centres. These have been described as the "employer of last resort"[32], essentially

costly and relatively inefficient as productive units. Another approach is to arrange work with varying degrees of shelter in association with normal employers in either the private or the public sectors. Sheltered work stations, enclaves within productive organizations devoted to producing products or services involving tasks to which handicapped persons can be expected to be trained. can represent a state in progression to open employment. And within open employment itself there is scope for some degree of shelter to meet the needs of the individual.

Much of the effectiveness and value of sheltered work depends on the quality of supervision that is provided. Special qualities, skills and attitudes are required of supervisors in this situation, and these will not normally be developed without a good deal of contact with handicapped persons as well as special training. In most sheltered work situations, some non-handicapped workers are employed to undertake tasks beyond the capacity of the handicapped and to provide a degree of continuity in the operation. Some supervisors might be expected to develop from among these people, though the process is likely to be slow and chancy without some formal training. A special course in supervision of the handicapped could perhaps be established by one or more College of Advanced Education as a specialist stream within its normal programme in supervision and management.

e. Promoting Sheltered Work Stations.

All sheltered work implies public funding support, normally administered by the Department of Social Security. Sheltered work in the open employment environment would be much less expensive than that provided in institutional sheltered workshops. Though some institutional workshops would be necessary, they could be kept to a minimum by encouraging employers to co-operate. This could perhaps be achieved by setting up a unit within the Department with negotiators responsible for 'selling' the idea to employers, and small teams of sheltered-work advisers, each comprising a rehabilitation counsellor familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the particular category of handicapped people concerned and a production engineer, to develop sheltered work stations and situations in conjunction with employers. The availibility of such a unit, supported by a publicity campaign among employers, could open up many more sheltered work positions than are now provided. With youth unemployment becoming endemic, the demand for sheltered work will continue to grow, and such a scheme could help to contain the cost of providing it.

f. Educational Objectives.

The institutions concerned with the education and training of mildly intellectually handicapped children appear generally to achieve a satisfactory balance between teaching basic living skills and specific vocational skills. However, there is clearly a point beyond which the effort required to inculcate skills of literacy and numeracy becomes greater than is justified by the educational returns,

and greater than is needed to provide the basis for a reasonably productive and satisfying life. Where learning is slow and difficult, as it is by definition with MIH persons, it is important that what is taught is totally functional, realistic in terms of the person's likely needs and, so far as possible, appropriate to chronological age. This may mean that some things, regarded as essential in the education of normal children and as appropriate to mental age, are bypassed, with the hope that the lack may be overcome later. Of first importance is that people should, if at all possible, be able to live independently and essentially normally. Never easy, this will be, for the reasons discussed above, increasingly difficult in the future, and will require a degree of flexibility very hard to achieve in an intellectually handicapped person. The fostering of this kind of flexibility is the great challenge for the educators and others involved.

g. Career Education and Work Experience.

From what has been reported above it will be clear that personal qualities are likely to be very relevant to successful employment. What is useful in this respect can, to a large extent, be defined in terms of attitudes. Qualities like punctuality, reliability, neatness and appropriateness of dress, expectations of the workplace and of one's fellow workers, and so on are absorbed as well as learned, so that teacher attitudes and example are particularly important, especially to that large proportion of the MIH coming from socially and economically disadvantaged homes. In this sense, at least, career education must be implicit in everything that is taught. The basic and independent living skills normally taught in special education courses should be related to possible vocational settings, though without assuming their necessary applications in employment. There are some career-related skills, locating and applying for jobs, presenting at interview, and using community placement services, for example, that merit specific attention.

Career education takes a variety of forms ranging from employment-oriented information-giving to the concept of it defined by Brolin: "a life-centred approach to education with work but one of the many life roles which make up a person's career ... student, homemaker, consumer, citizen, and parent, besides a worker ... It does not replace traditional subjects and is not a separate curriculum or subject; rather it is a unified approach to education for life".[33] Though there is widespread acceptance of the need for career education, there is considerable disagreement as to what should be its nature and structure. One view sees the solution to the problem in a separate curriculum at secondary level by which intellectually handicapped children are single-mindedly prepared for employment with all other educational objectives subordinated to that.[34] In this approach, the formal school curriculum is directed towards giving knowledge and skills thought to have direct influence on employability, with the process culminating in work experience.

Few would question the need to prepare MIH children to cope with

employment should that be their lot, nor disparage the concept of work experience as a useful part of that preparation. What could be unfortunate is the effect that a programme of this kind might have in establishing employment as the ultimate aspiration and badge of success in the minds of the young people concerned, when there is a high probability that normal employment of any significant and lasting kind will not be available to the majority of them. Career education, in our view, needs to be interwoven with the basic curriculum, and should have as its objective the preparation of young people to adapt to whatever style of living may be the most satisfactory available. Work experience can be useful in this context as illustrating one of the possiblities. There is a need for a carefully devised curriculum to this end, not only nor specifically for intellectually handicapped children but as an alternative to meet the requirements of all those students whose transition to adulthood does not involve participation at that time in tertiary studies.

h. Vocational Skills.

Mildly intellectually handicapped young persons have shown themselves capable of acquiring a wide range of skills which have, or have had, applications in employment, and a selection of these are taught in special schools, work preparation centres and sheltered workshops. It is increasingly evident from studies in Australia and elsewhere that a relatively small and probably declining proportion of them is being given the opportunity to apply their skills in open employment. The effort expended in teaching a skill is not only wasted but counter-productive if the young person concerned, having been allowed to regard that skill as his 'meal-ticket', finds that in the hard world of employment no one is prepared to cash it for him.

We do not suggest that specific vocational skills should not be taught, rather that care should be used in choosing those that are. The most cursory consideration and labour-market trends will reveal some skills, of importance and value in the past, which are vulnerable to imminent technological change or to industrial restructuring. For example, industrial sewing is at risk in both ways. Many of its labour-intensive processes are threatened by high-technology, high-productivity innovations, and it is not difficult to envisage further 'rationalizations' arising from technological advances already on the horizon. In addition, the clothing and footware industries are likely to be among the first affected by any modification of the tariff structure. To teach skills in this area to MIH persons, and by that means to cause them to believe that they have abilities with immediate and continuing saleability in the labour market. is to condemn them to frustration and a high risk of unemployment.

For many MIH persons, the learning of any skill, vocational or otherwise, is a slow and difficult business. Great care, involving detailed job analyses and

skills for which they currently have a need; their concern is with their immediate problems. Young people joining the work force must have a much longer prospect; they have a right to expect that their hard-won skills will serve them during at least a substantial portion of their working careers. A great deal more work is needed to identify skills appropriate to MIH persons for which needs in the labour market may be discerned as continuing or developing.

i. Para-Vocational Skills.

The Warnock Report drew attention to the need to prepare people with various disabilities to achieve "significant living without work". Pointing out that working gives people a sense of purpose and competence, a feeling of being needed, an environmental alternative to the home, an expanded range of social contact and a diurnal routine which can help in the development of self-discipine, the Report concluded that "significant living without work may well lie in handicapped people doing far more to support each other, and also in giving some support to people who are lonely and vulnerable though not handicapped".[35]

The use of the word 'work' in this context is open to question. The Report is in fact discussing the prospect of life without employment, and is highlighting a problem which will face a growing number of people, non-handicapped as well as those with which it is specifically concerned. In the possible future about which we speculated earlier these people will need help to achieve <u>significant living without employment</u>, to operate, at least for a large part of their lives, within the informal or 'free' economy. It is appropriate that, alongside any consideration of possible vocational skills that may be functional in employment, thought should be given to other skills which will permit productive and satisfying activities outside employment. Though these are often referred to as 'leisure-time' skills, the term has little meaning except in a life dominated by employment. It seems more realistic to see them as falling into two categories: those which are directly productive, such as crafts, domestic skills, horticultural skills and the like; and those which are recreational - games, recreational hobbies and so on. Both contribute to the social and mental well-being of the individual, and the skills associated with them are amenable to the same kinds of training techniques as are applied in developing social and vocational skills. Here again there is scope for a great deal of further work, both in curriculum development and in changing attitudes. It is interesting to note that Cameron-Smith, reporting on a recent survey, suggests that "there is evidence that those (not in employment) who had daily occupation outside the home were as content with their lives as those who had paid jobs".[36]

j. Placement, Transition and Follow-Up

Though he was writing at a time when employment prospects were better than now, and in USA where attitudes more favourable than those of Australian

employers towards the employment of handicapped people seem always to have existed, Ronald W. Conley made a statement which merits consideration in the local context. "Gainful work", he wrote, "is almost always feasible for persons with IQs above 40, unless precluded by physical or emotional handicaps. The vocational failure of a number of retardates is largely attributable to a lack of supportive services".[37] His definition of 'gainful work' included sheltered work, and the services of which he was critical included institutions, rehabilitation agencies and employment services. The employment prospects of intellectually handicapped people in Australia are much less satisfactory than those of which he was writing, perhaps reflecting the quality of the services available to them.

The Review of the Commonwealth Employment Service (the Norgard Report, 1977) found that in respect of the employment needs of physically and mentally handicapped persons the CES was providing "only token service" and recommended that more staff and resources should be allocated 'to produce a better and more personalized service for handicapped clients". In particular, the Review suggested that the CES should increase its "outreach services" to institutions that deal with the handicapped rather than offering its services only to those clients who come to it.[38] These recommendations have been acknowledged by policy decisions which are directly contrary to them and, although there are some concerned and dedicated individual officers, the service provided by the CES is less satisfactory now than when the Review reported. In our opinion, the CES as it is now constituted can do little if anything to give practical help to MIH young people seeking open employment, and none at all in arranging sheltered work stations. Not only do the political decisions which have caused this decline in service contribute to the misery and frustration of intellectually handicapped young people, but they increase the costs to the community of social welfare services.

In these circumstances, placement activities are largely left to the staff of the special schools and other institutions involved, some of whom are outstandingly effective. These people must also do what they can to overcome the often severe transition difficulties experienced by handicapped young persons entering the work force. At this stage, personal help is often needed for some weeks after starting in a job and, whilst employers may be understanding of the need for help in transition, they normally do not have the skill nor the time to provide it. A system in which new entrants to the work force begin their working lives on a part-time basis, say three days a week, spending the other two days back at the school or centre undergoing further training specific to the needs they now find themselves to have, seems worthy of consideration. The length of time for which such an arrangment should be continued would be subject to negotiation with the employer and to the judgement of the young person's institutional mentor.

Various studies[39] have shown that many initial placements in open employment are unstable, and that appreciable numbers move into sheltered work or unemployment within two years. It is suggested that those who find themselves

unable to retain their jobs in the open labour market should be invited back to the special school or other institution from which they entered the work force for a period of further training in social, vocational and para-vocational skills which experience has shown them to lack. This training should be given in such a way that they are protected from feelings of failure. Further periods of recurrent education may be necessary to meet changing circumstances during their careers, and it may be that this would best be administered through the TAFE system.

k. Legislative Action

There are certain legislative and other government actions which would enhance the employment prospects of MIH persons and generally improve their life-patterns. The recently published Bright Report[40] looked in some detail at this question and makes a number of suggestions, at least four of which seem highly desirable in the Victorian scene.

i. Anti-discrimination legislation should be extended to prohibit discrimination in employment on the grounds of physical or intellectual impairment. The main value of such a move may well prove to be the educative effect it would have in changing attitudes in the community. The Report stops short of recommending a quota system at this stage; we would agree that a requirement that an employer should include among his employees a given proportion of handicapped people is unlikely to achieve its objective and could very well generate resentment against those having this privilege.[41]

ii. The remuneration for workers in sheltered workshops is inadequate. Several suggestions are made by which this could be overcome.[42]

iii. A change is suggested in the provisions of the Handicapped Persons Act to permit funding of sheltered work other than on the premises of approved organizations. The object of this would be to make possible adequate arrangements for sheltered work stations in open employment environments. The savings in costs of buildings and maintenance could make this attractive as an economy measure.[43]

iv. Modified apprenticeship training courses are suggested, perhaps directed towards training tradesmen's assistants; a scheme operating in California is suggested for consideration as a pattern.[44]

In addition to these suggestions, some general provision for differential wage rates for slow workers seems desirable at the Federal level, even though the State provisions both in Victoria and South Australia are very little used.[45]

Conclusion

The employment environment for intellectually handicapped persons has never been good. There still exists a good deal of prejudice and folklore among employers and in the population as a whole. Progress in overcoming it has been made in the last two decades, but a new factor has supervened: structural unemployment among potential entrants to the work force, especially those who are educationally deprived and with whom the MIH can be seen as constituting a continuum.

Although it is not possible to get hard data to support the suggestion, it seems very likely that those with characteristics of one kind or another which fall just outside the range of impairments categorized as handicaps and those whose impairment has not been recognized for categorization, may suffer more serious employment problems than those just inside. However, those who are categorized as handicapped, though they have the undoubted advantages of professional assistance in preparing for and entering the labour market, suffer the associated disadvantages of the poor self-concept and the community prejudice that inevitably go with the label.

In this paper, we have attempted to look objectively at the labour-market conditions which can be expected to affect the employment environment for intellectually handicapped people during the rest of this decade and beyond, and to make some suggestions which could ameliorate the bad effects of these changing conditions. But, though there are various things that can be done to improve the employment prospects for MIH persons, any such improvement will be limited and must be regarded as temporary. The labour market is declining and seems likely to continue doing so, especially for those who must rely on jobs requiring low levels of education and skill.

With this prospect in mind, it is important that those who are concerned with the welfare of these people should do whatever they can to help each individual who does not succeed in finding or keeping employment to achieve significant living without employment. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this task will be helping the young people concerned make the social adjustment needed to establish and retain a satisfactory self-concept in the fact of their inability to achieve the dignity of employment. Those who can succeed in this may be able to turn their efforts to being useful and productive members of society in some unfamiliar and not-yet-accepted roles outside the formal labour market.

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